



New England includes many ecosystems that, by virtue of their ecological value, recreational value, or proximity to large populations, hold a special significance to us. EPA - New England is focusing particular attention and resources on these special places. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, these community-based initiatives are delivering tangible environmental improvements to these areas.

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Fact Sheet/March 2000

Upper Narragansett Bay Woonasquatucket River

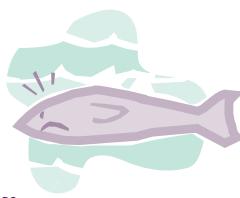


What Makes The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Special?

- Once the life line of power to the many textile mills, today the Woonasquatucket River has fallen into neglect. The upper half of the river is primarily residential; and the lower half is urban and heavily industrialized. In August 1998, the Woonasquatucket River received national recognition and distinction when it was recognized as an American Heritage River.
- The river is the focal point of revitalization efforts in downtown Providence. A "greenway" is targeted to promote recreation and restoration along its banks.

Why Does The Woonasquatucket River Need Special Attention?

- The Woonasquatucket River is a priority waterbody. In June 1996, elevated dioxin levels were detected in fish and eels. In response, a "catch and release" advisory was issued by the RI Department of Health.
- Water and sediment sampling was conducted from 1997 to present, and dioxin contamination was detected in and along the river. The "catch-and-release" policy for fishing in the Woonasquatucket River was reaffirmed and residents were warned.



Future Plans

What is the Long Term Goal?

To preserve and restore the uses of these rivers including fishing, swimming and good quality habitat.

What Partnership Progress Has Been Made?

- Found 50+ pipes flowing in dry weather into the Woonasquatucket; inspected 14 facilities for unpermitted discharges.
- Reduced public risk from dioxin in sediments near Centerdale Manor and Allendale dam by fencing, conducting removal actions, public education, and expanding outreach to minority residents.
- Established health and education subcommittee to conduct risk communication and public outreach/education.
- Re-issued the Smithfield waste-water treatment plant permit to incorporate nutrient limits.
- Funded Providence Plan's River Ranger program.

What Actions are Planned for 2000?

- Document pipe ownership, identify sources of pollutants, eliminate unpermitted discharges, and report results to the public.
- Identify options for contaminated soil at Centerdale Manor site, and repairing the Allendale Dam.
- Continue support for the health and education subcommittee to develop tools for better public outreach
- Get community input to guide EPA efforts in American Heritage River program

Upper Narragansett Bay



Watersheds

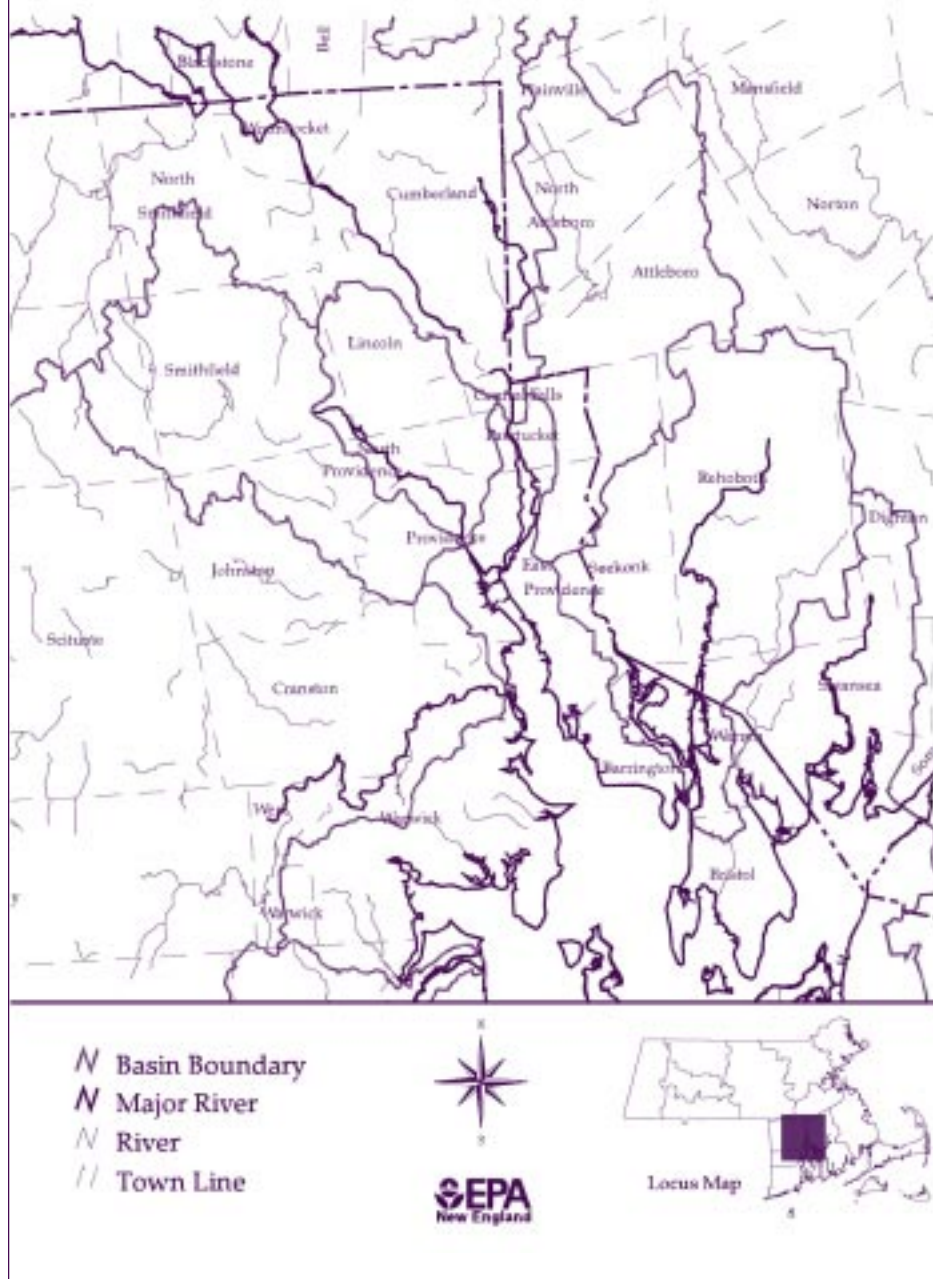
Who Are The Partners?

EPA New England • The Providence Plan • Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management • Rhode Island Department of Transportation • Rhode Island Department of Health • National Park Service • Army Corps of Engineers • Narragansett Bay Commission • Woonasquatucket River Watershed Coalition • U.S. Geological Service • Olneyville Housing Corporation • Environmental Diversity Education Forum • The Urban League of Rhode Island • Save the Bay • The Audubon Society of Rhode Island • City of Providence, Office of Neighborhood Environmental Affairs and Department of Planning • Socio-Economic Development Center for South East Asians • Northern Rhode Island Conservation District • City of North Providence • Club Neopolsi Creations

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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.